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No. 79.

A Lesson in Harmony

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN

Poet Laureate

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A LESSON IN HARMONY.

*Produced at the Garrick Theatre on Thursday, June
16th, 1904, with the following cast:*

Phil. Leslie, In the city.....MR. DAVID DOMVILLE
Ida Leslie, His wife.....MISS JESSIE BATEMAN
Otho Hazlewood, His friend.....
.....MR. ARTHUR BOURCHIER

SCENE.— *A suburban garden near London.*

TIME.— *To-day.*

A LESSON IN HARMONY.

SCENE.— *Villa and garden at Maplehurst.*

TIME.— *10 a. m. on a summer morning.*

(Ida discovered syringing a bed of roses.)

IDA LESLIE.

(Putting down the syringe to cut a rosebud with a pair of garden scissors hanging from her waist. As she does so a letter falls, unobserved by herself, out of the bosom of her dress, into the flower bed.) What a beauty! That will put Phil in a good humour, if anything will. When we were engaged he used to give me roses. But *I* was not gathered then! A-h!

PHIL. LESLIE.

(Calling from inside the house.) I must be off, Ida; where are you?

IDA LESLIE.

Here, Phil, here, in the garden.

PHIL. LESLIE.

(Coming out of the house dressed to go to town.) Just one kiss *(pause)*, and I must start. *(Going to gate.)* I want to catch the 10.15 if I can.

IDA LESLIE.

Yes, but just one rose.

PHIL. LESLIE.

(*Intently reading Financial Times.*) Rose $\frac{3}{4}$.

IDA LESLIE.

Yes, but do look at it, it's a Fellenberg.

PHIL. LESLIE.

Fell $1\frac{1}{2}$.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Putting it in his coat.*) Is it not a love?

PHIL. LESLIE.

(*A little impatiently.*) Beautiful, beautiful! But I am in a great hurry this morning.

IDA LESLIE.

Husbands always are.

PHIL. LESLIE.

So are lovers, they say, don't they?

IDA LESLIE.

Yes —, but lovers are in a hurry to get to one, husbands to get away from one. I may engage the maid, may I not? How nice to have one, all to myself! It will save me such a lot of money. I shall be able to dress ever so much more cheaply.

PHIL. LESLIE.

I am afraid I must ask you to wait a little.

IDA LESLIE.

Oh, Phil! You promised you ——

PHIL. LESLIE.

Things in the city are so — so very uncertain just now.

IDA LESLIE.

Very well, I will wait. But you'll order that Victoria to-day, won't you? Or shall *I* run up and see to it?

PHIL. LESLIE.

Do be patient, dear, please, till things mend. (*Ida moves L.*) And please practise that Lesson in Harmony to-day, won't you?

IDA LESLIE.

(*With a gesture of impatience.*) Bother! I never set my heart on anything, but —— (*She moves towards the house R.*)

PHIL. LESLIE.

I shall have to run to catch the train. Don't forget about sending my white waistcoats to the wash. (*Goes out of gate.*)

IDA LESLIE.

(*Going into house.*) All right.

PHIL. LESLIE.

(*Hurrying back and turning round calls out.*)
Ida! Ida! Ida! Mind, dear, you speak to the

butcher about hanging his meat longer. It was so beastly tough last night.

IDA LESLIE.

Was it? (*From off R.*)

PHIL. LESLIE.

Yes, that it was! (*He moves toward gate and Ida goes into the house.*)
(*Otho falls out of hammock.*)

PHIL. LESLIE.

What's that?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Only me.

PHIL. LESLIE.

I thought it was an earthquake. (*Helps Otho off ground.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Are you off?

PHIL. LESLIE.

Yes!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Then good-bye, old fellow; for I must leave you to-day.

PHIL. LESLIE.

Please don't go to-day.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I'm afraid I must.

PHIL. LESLIE.

I want you particularly to stay till to-morrow. (*Looking at his watch.*) I can't catch the 10.15 now. Well, the 10.30 must do.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

It's all right about Gwen. Her father is quite satisfied, and we are to be married in September. Isn't it a good one of her? (*Showing a photograph.*)

PHIL. LESLIE.

Charming! Lucky man! But don't go to-day. Ida's low and hipped, and I want you to stay and amuse her. Besides you promised to help me with that new bin of Lafitte.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

That settles it. I'll stay. How are things in the city? (*Sits in hammock.*)

PHIL. LESLIE.

Much better. The anxiety is not over yet, but we shall know to-day. I shall just catch the 10.30 going quietly. Mind you cheer up Ida.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Trust me! (*Waving his hand, as Phil goes through gate and off R.*) Good luck to you, old man.

(*Exit Phil.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*Alone.*) Dear old Phil! Thinks of nothing but

making money for his pretty little wife. Well, what better can a man do? *I shall. (Taking out the photograph and kissing it.)* This is a charming place! It's difficult to believe it's so near town. Thank Heaven, a playwright can live anywhere, and Gwen and I will live — well, nowhere; in fact, anywhere. *(Putting back the photograph.)* Bless her! And we'll have still better roses than these! *(Going to the flower bed down R. where Ida plucked the rosebud, and stooping to pick up a piece of paper.)* And we won't have pieces of paper lying in the flower beds. *Verses!*

Better to love and lose;
To worship from head to shoes;
I sigh and I weep and I moan;
For thou art my unknown known.

Nothing less! And what rubbish! What! To Ida! From L. G. I thought I knew the writing. That fatuous young philanderer, Sir Lothario Greatrex! Makes love to every woman that will let him. I wonder how this got into the flower bed. She was syringing the roses just now. It looks as though
—— *(Picks up syringe.)*

(Ida comes out of the house.)

IDA LESLIE.

Oh, how kind of you, Mr. Hazlewood, to syringe my roses. I have been busy seeing to Phil's white waistcoats. He's so particular, and makes such a fuss about them!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Husbands do. They're such brutes.

IDA LESLIE.

I don't say that; but men are rather tiresome, sometimes, about trifles — I mean, when they are married.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Exactly. What can it matter whether waistcoats are clean or dirty?

IDA LESLIE.

Oh!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I mean, "when we are married"?

IDA LESLIE.

(*Comes L. C.*) And I had to see the butcher, too, for Phil grumbles about the meat.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I say, don't you think I should make a fine gardener?

IDA LESLIE.

Did *you* think the saddle of mutton was tough last night?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Tough! Why, it might have been lamb. It was as tender as — well, as men are, before they are married. I am sure it was not married mutton.

IDA LESLIE.

Why?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Because it melted like — like a man, *before* he is married.

IDA LESLIE.

You are laughing at me. (*Sits C.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Upon my word, Mrs. Leslie, I never was more serious in my life. It was excellent. (*He sits down R. of her on the stone seat of a sundial.*)

IDA LESLIE.

I wonder what it is makes men so different, after marriage, from what they were before?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I can't say, you see, never having been married.

IDA LESLIE.

But you agree with me, don't you?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Of course I agree with you — as I am not married. If I were, I suppose I should disagree with you.

IDA LESLIE.

I sometimes think marriage is a dreadful mistake.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Of course it is. It is the oldest form of error. Unfortunately, too, it is the most persistent, for we

seem quite incapable of getting rid of it. Man has changed his religion several times; no form of philosophy lasts more than a generation, and, as for political institutions, we alter them every session. But though everybody, at least everybody who is sensible and charming, concurs in condemning marriage, no one seems able to teach us how to get rid of it.

IDA LESLIE.

How true! And how cleverly you put it. I wish I could talk like you.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

So you would, my dear lady, if you were not married. Marriage begins by enslaving the body, and ends by subjecting the mind. No married person can feel, think, or act freely.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Sighing.*) I am sure *I* cannot. I often wonder why people marry at all — men at least. A woman must, I suppose.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Well, scarcely; unless a man must too. It requires two musts.

IDA LESLIE.

It is *all* must, in marriage.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Perhaps that is the reason why it so soon grows musty.

IDA LESLIE.

(*After impatiently gathering some honeysuckle,*

and returning to her seat near Otho, who has not moved.) Shall you ever marry, Mr. Hazlewood?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I? After what I have just said? Marriage is the makeshift of monotonous minds, the last resource of persons who have exhausted every form of pleasure, and are not such fools as to believe in the discovery of a new one. But it is as well to reserve something for one's old age. Some people reserve austere virtue as the consolation of that melancholy period; others, a cellar of old port, and a chest of fine cigars. I shall keep marriage in reserve as the mitigation of that evil day. When I have no longer a leg to stand on I shall lie down and propose — to my housekeeper. (*Rise.*)

IDA LESLIE.

I'm afraid you're very naughty, Mr. Hazlewood.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Naughty? I make hay while the sun shines.

IDA LESLIE.

Does it shine very much?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Fairly well; for an austere climate like ours.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Sighing.*) I wish I were a man!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Would you make hay? It does not require to be a man to do that. (*She looks at him.*) All flesh

is grass; and therefore make hay of it. Many women seem to think so.

IDA LESLIE.

Now, you are cynical.

(Ida rises and plucks a curled leaf off one of the roses. Otho remains seated.)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(Aside — taking the photograph from his pocket, and looking at it.) Gwen, darling, may I give this dear, silly, little woman a good lesson? May I, Gwen? *(Puts back the photograph.)* Yes, I think so. She sadly needs it. *(Goes up to her.)*

IDA LESLIE.

Tell me, Mr. Hazlewood, what is your idea of happiness?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(Up C.) Loving, and being loved.

IDA LESLIE.

Are you incapable of loving? *(Moves down.)*

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I? How can you ask such a question? *(Follows her.)*

IDA LESLIE.

Then, I am sure you are loved.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

By whom?

IDA LESLIE.

Dear Mr. Hazlewood, will you tell me who it is?
I promise not to betray you.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I am sure you won't.

IDA LESLIE.

Who is it then?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Why do you want to know?

IDA LESLIE.

A woman's curiosity.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Fatal curiosity.

IDA LESLIE.

Fatal?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Often.

IDA LESLIE.

Why fatal?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(Raising his eyes, looking at her earnestly, and then dropping them.) Can't you guess?

IDA LESLIE.

I? *(A pause.)*

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*Leaning towards her.*) Forgive me! Did you suspect I was in love?

IDA LESLIE.

How should I? I don't know anybody so — clever — or so — so nice. Why, see! I was miserable this morning, and you have brightened me up, interested me, and made me feel quite happy.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Then, since you are happy, may I tell you what would make me so?

IDA LESLIE.

Oh, do! I should so like to hear it. (*Sits C.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*Leaning over her.*) Loving and being loved by one you love — that is my ideal, my dream of happiness. But the surroundings should be in harmony with one's feelings. The frame should be worthy of the picture; and one fair and fascinating should be encompassed by all that is fascinating and fair. If you ask me what I long for at this moment, it is that I should be transported into some distant land of bewitching beauty, blessed with blue skies, blue seas, blue mountains, and whose only denizens, save two voyaging selves, were every delicious scent, and every dulcet sound.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Sighing deeply.*) A-h! How delightful! Too delightful for words! Too heavenly for real life.

(*Laying her hand on his arm.*) But go on! Do go on! I love to hear you.

(*Enter Servant from house.*)

SERVANT.

Sir Lothario Greatrex.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I'll stroll round the garden.

IDA LESLIE.

No. (*To Servant.*) Tell Sir Lothario I am not at home.

(*Exit Servant into house.*)

(*Ida continues to walk among the flower beds; Otho joins her.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

You're very fond of this little place, aren't you?

IDA LESLIE.

Fairly so.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Only fairly.

IDA LESLIE.

Do you want me to tell the truth? (*Moves to sundial.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Please.

IDA LESLIE.

Sometimes I like it.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Sometimes!

IDA LESLIE.

Don't they say that prisoners, after an outburst of revolt, play with their chains!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I've heard so. Most men, when they have saved a little money, build themselves a prison, in the shape of a house, too costly for them to go away from, and then provide themselves with the gaoler.

IDA LESLIE.

In the shape of a wife?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Precisely; and they have to go through life together, to dinners, to theatres, to the seaside — chained to each other like convicts.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Impatiently.*) It is just like that. (*Crosses to L.*) Oh!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

A friend of mine said rather a good thing the other day. He doesn't object to being married, but he objected to being always married.

IDA LESLIE.

What did he mean?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Well, I suppose he meant that he'd like to loosen

the coupling chain for a little, but not to snap it altogether, eh? That's about it, isn't it?

IDA LESLIE.

(*Picking a flower impatiently.*) I don't know what I should like. (*Turning to him.*) I wish you would tell me. (*Boy rings bell at gate.*)

(*Enter Boy with note which he gives to Otho and exits.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

But ——. (*Looking at the note and reading it intently, and saying significantly, while doing so, "Um! Um!"*) It's Phil's writing. (*Ida sits on hammock.*) Supposing, my dear Mrs. Leslie, you had to give up your house, your garden, and everything you now have, would you not mind? (*He puts letter in his pocket.*)

IDA LESLIE.

It depends. I scarcely think any woman minds leaving her house, no matter how nice it is, for one that is still nicer. I fear we are rather fond of — well, pretty things.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Naturally. So are men. Every nice woman is compounded, in equal proportions, of the spiritual and the material, and has the right to expect that romance shall be elegant, and passion not attended with discomfort. Just as no man makes love to a woman in curl papers, so no woman would run away with a man in his slippers. But — (*again looking at the letter*) supposing you had to leave your nice

house, and charming garden, for one less nice and less charming, you would mind that, wouldn't you?

IDA LESLIE.

Well, naturally. But there is no danger of that, I think.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I hope not. (*Looking at her compassionately.*)

IDA LESLIE.

(*Alarmed.*) Surely there is no such danger, is there? (*Seizing hold of his arm.*) That note! It is my husband's writing! (*He puts the letter behind him.*) Is anything wrong?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Mrs. Leslie, you know things have been very unsettled and uncertain, in the city, of late.

IDA LESLIE.

Phil is ruined! Tell me the truth. Tell me, at once. Let me know the worst.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Gently, my dear lady. Let me beg you not to upset yourself.

IDA LESLIE.

Oh, but my husband, my poor husband. What will he do? Tell me what he says.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

But your dream? The earthly paradise? The

island home in the Aegean, blue skies, blue seas, blue mountains?

IDA LESLIE.

How can you? — at such a moment? Dreams indeed! My dear, dear little home! (*She sobs.*) My beautiful garden! Just as I had made them so nice! Where does he write from? Give me the letter — (*takes letter.*) — get me the A. B. C. —

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Hadn't you better read the letter, first.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Reading.*)

"My Dear Otho:

"Such a turn of luck! My head clerk met me at the station with my city letters. Things have turned out capitally, and instead of being five thousand to the bad by my late speculations, I am ten thousand to the good. I am not going to the city, but am going to take a holiday to-day, and shall be home as soon as ever I have gone through the correspondence here with my clerk. So mind you don't go."

(*Brightening up, but still reproachfully.*) Why did you torment me so? (*Otho takes out photo and kisses it.*) What are you doing? (*Takes photo from him.*) What a lovely girl!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Isn't she?

IDA LESLIE.

Who is she?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

My future wife.

IDA LESLIE.

Your future wife! (*Looking at photo, reads.*)
"From Gwen." May one ask how long you have
been engaged?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

With her father's consent, since this morning —
(*Gazing at the photograph.*) Isn't she charming?

IDA LESLIE.

But — Mr. Hazlewood' —

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Yes — I know what you are going to say.

IDA LESLIE.

Probably you do. (*With dignity.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Forgive me. (*Rise.*) But remember, I put only
a supposititious case. I am your husband's oldest
friend, and would do anything for him, and — if
you will allow me to say so — for you also.

IDA LESLIE.

You're really too obliging.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Again I say, forgive me. (*Goes up.*) I am a
good deal older than you, I am sorry to say — and
it would be rather hard, therefore, if I had not some

small compensation for that melancholy circumstance by being perhaps just a wee bit wiser — in a worldly sense.

IDA LESLIE.

I cannot honestly say, Mr. Hazlewood, that you seemed *very* old just now.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Perhaps not. Neither will I pretend that I am so old that I might not fall in love with you, if you were not my friend's wife.

IDA LESLIE.

And if you were not engaged to some one prettier than your friend's wife. No, I'm not fishing.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Once more, please, forgive me. Syringing your flowers this morning, I accidentally found this — it's all right. (*Producing the verses signed L. G. Ida starts and shows confusion.*) I am sure you tolerated, rather than encouraged, this somewhat poor versifier — and no one will ever know of — his indiscretion — but you and I. (*He gives her the piece of paper.*)

IDA LESLIE.

(*Crosses L.*) At any rate, you cannot think I am very infatuated about him, for I sent him away, in order to enjoy your — a — society.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Quite so. All men are conceited, where women are concerned, as you must well know, and I was

much flattered at holding my own against that amorous young rhymester, despite the handicap of fifteen more years.

IDA LESLIE.

And even when you only feigned to be in love!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*Moving towards her.*) Are you sure, Mrs. Leslie, *he* isn't feigning, too? Are you sure all men are not feigning when they make love to other men's wives?

IDA LESLIE.

I'll admit you did it rather nicely.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Oh, it is so easy. Besides, I will confess, I did it, with considerable advantages in my favour — first and foremost, a most captivating person to do it to. (*Ida curtseys.*) Then, in the second place, what you are good enough to call nicely done, was not quite original.

IDA LESLIE.

What do you mean?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Well, you see I've just finished a play, in which it all comes in; and I have been teaching an actor how to say it. You know actors always write the author's play for him — all the good things in it at least — and so the author, in sheer gratitude, teaches the actor how to say them, unless, indeed, the dramatic critic performs both operations for them.

IDA LESLIE.

Then all that was play-acting?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Of course. (*Moves R.*)

IDA LESLIE.

Now, I understand why going to the theatre is so nice. But what a memory you must have.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

It did not require much effort of memory. But it did need a little ingenuity and transposition now and then. You didn't quite give me the right cues.

IDA LESLIE.

I think I gave you them very nicely.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*Putting his hand for a moment on hers, and she quickly withdraws it; sits R. of her.*) Indeed you did. May I preach?

IDA LESLIE.

Preach?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Yes, a curtain lecture, only with blue skies instead of blue curtains — just a little lecture. May I?

IDA LESLIE.

Well, just a little one.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Go to the play, by all means; pay your half guinea,

weep — laugh and sigh — as much as ever you like ; and then have done with it. There is the world of dreams and the world of facts ; stage life and real life. They are quite distinct and separate. If ever found in conjunction, it is only for a few privileged beings and with them for a limited time ! Had we gone to Sorrento —

IDA LESLIE.

Sorrento !

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Well, that's the bluest place I can think of. The first day it would have rained ; the second, we should have quarrelled — the third, since there would have been nothing to prevent it, we should have separated.

IDA LESLIE.

You're not very complimentary.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Well, no doubt I exaggerate — by a few days. Romantic love is a terminable annuity, and unfortunately, it is terminable before death. Indeed it is like living on one's capital ; and as romantic lovers are very prodigal, they soon run through it. Marriage was invented, like trustees, to save lovers from beggaring themselves. It was devised in order to prolong what is over, and to continue what may be finished ; to induce, nay, to compel people to eat up the cold mutton when the hot joint has cooled.

IDA LESLIE.

How dreadful !

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Is it? Nothing is dreadful that must be. You see we come back to the mutton; to the subject with which we started. I overheard what Phil said to you about his waistcoats and the mutton and your replies; immediately after, I found those gushing verses; I drew my own conclusions, and thought that perhaps I might venture to give the Lesson in Harmony Phil was so anxious you should take.

IDA LESLIE.

What if I call it a lesson in thorough bass?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Ah! but you won't — you'll let me off this once, won't you?

IDA LESLIE.

I'm not sure —

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

After all, white waistcoats must be washed — sometimes; and if a man is in that — forgive me — that beastly city, it is not so very unreasonable that a woman should steal a few moments from her — garden — to confer with the laundress. Moreover, mutton ought to be hung — and now that we are both in a candid mood — the saddle last night — was — well, rather like a saddle.

IDA LESLIE.

I'll admit I didn't eat any of it. I suppose I mustn't say that Phil is inclined to be a little fastidious.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

He was very fastidious, at any rate, when he chose you; and therefore you, at least, may pardon him for being fastidious in other ways. Marriage puts most men at a considerable disadvantage. They have to keep the wolf from the door, to provide the purple and fine linen, to pay the Christmas bills; and in order to do these things, they have not only to work hard, and to endure a good deal of anxiety, but to enter into the many little money details. Now, if there is one thing more than another that all nice women dislike, it is money details. Blue skies, blue seas, blue mountains —

IDA LESLIE.

Yes, yes, I know.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Are much nicer subjects of conversation, and it is so easy for men who are not married to indulge in them.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Rise.*) Yes, I understand, thank you. (*She turns and sees the Servant, who enters the garden and hands Ida a telegram. Reads aloud.*) "Will come this afternoon by the 4.25 train — Yours respectfully, Ellen Backhouse." Why, that is the name of the maid.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

No doubt Phil telegraphed to her to come, the moment he heard of the change of affairs in the city.

IDA LESLIE.

Will you forgive me? I must go and see to her

room being got ready. (*Clapping her hands.*)
How nice! (*She goes into the house.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*To photo of Gwen.*) Gwen darling, will you demand the mountains, blue skies, blue seas, blue rooms, blue maids. I wonder! (*Crosses to house.*)
(*Phil comes up the walk.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

There you are!

PHIL. LESLIE.

You got my letter?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*Grasping his hand affectionately.*) Yes. So glad your luck's turned.

PHIL. LESLIE.

Where is Ida? (*C.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Gone indoors to make preparations for her new maid. She had a telegram saying Ellen somebody is to be here this afternoon. She's radiant about it.

PHIL. LESLIE.

I thought she would be. Was she very low before? (*Throws hat and umbrella in hammock.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Very.

PHIL. LESLIE.

But you cheered her up?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

I did my best. (*Slapping him on the shoulder.*)

PHIL. LESLIE.

Thanks, old man.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

But I say, old boy, if you don't mind, I think I should not make such a fuss about the mutton being tough.

PHIL. LESLIE.

Did I make a fuss?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Well, you said it was tough, and wanted hanging, when really it was very fair, and when mutton is young, much may be forgiven. And, when women are hipped, they hate being talked to about tough mutton.

PHIL. LESLIE.

All right, old man! I'll see the butcher myself. (*Crosses R.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

And, I say, if I were you — it's quite between ourselves you know — you and I are old friends — I wouldn't wear quite so many white waistcoats — or if I do, I would wash them myself.

PHIL. LESLIE.

What do you mean?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Precisely what I say. (*Phil laughs and moves towards house.*) And just one thing more, while we are on the subject! If you don't mind, talk about blue skies sometimes — blue seas — blue mountains.

PHIL. LESLIE.

But they're *not* blue.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

My dear fellow, I know that just as well as you do. But what does it matter what colour they are? Say they are blue. Women like them to be blue, especially when they feel blue themselves; and mind you, say it in the proper tone of voice. Blue skies — blue seas — blue mountains. (*Phil repeats after him.*)

(*Ida comes out of the house.*)

IDA LESLIE.

Phil! The maid is coming at 4.25.

PHIL. LESLIE.

I telegraphed to her. And I rather hope the Victoria will come by the same train. I telegraphed for that too.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Throwing her arms round him.*) You dear old thing. (*Otho coughs.*)

PHIL. LESLIE.

But, don't you think, Ida, after this new stroke of

luck we are entitled to a holiday — I mean a real holiday — a run abroad —

IDA LESLIE.

Oh, yes.

PHIL. LESLIE.

To blue skies — blue seas.

IDA LESLIE.

Ah!

PHIL. LESLIE.

Blue mountains!

IDA LESLIE.

(*Putting her arm through his.*) Delightful!

PHIL. LESLIE.

Now I'll go round to the stables and give orders about the Victoria being met.

IDA LESLIE.

Oh, yes; do, do!

(*Otho picks up from hammock Phil's hat and stick; puts them on and sings "When We Are Married," and laughs at Ida.*)

(*Exit Phil through C. gate to the stables. Enter Servant from house.*)

SERVANT.

Sir Lothario Greatrex has called again.

IDA LESLIE.

Ask him to wait a moment.

(*Exit Servant into house.*)

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

(*Puts hat and stick back into hammock.*) What are you going to do?

IDA LESLIE.

Going to send him back his verses. But I don't know what to say.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

May I help you?

IDA LESLIE.

It's a shame to trouble you.

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

It's a pleasure. How shall we begin. I know, Dear Sir Lothario.

IDA LESLIE.

"Dear Sir Lothario": —

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

So far it's very easy, isn't it? (*He goes to her R.; after a pause he continues.*) I return you the verses, with best thanks for your attentions. But Mr. Hazlewood, who is here, and who is a great authority on verses, says there are three false quantities in them, and four false rhymes —

IDA LESLIE.

Am I to write that?

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

Yes, it will do him good.

IDA LESLIE.

(*Writing.*) “Four false rhymes”——

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

And if you will call to-morrow afternoon, about five, by which time my husband will be at home, and Mr. Hazlewood will have left ——

IDA LESLIE.

No, no, coward!

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

It will give him much pleasure to hear how well I've progressed with ——

IDA LESLIE.

“How well I've progressed with”——

OTHO HAZLEWOOD.

My Lesson in Harmony!

IDA LESLIE.

“My Lesson in Harmony.”

CURTAIN.

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- 228 The Lady of the Lions
- 229 The Rights of Man
- 230 My Husband's Ghost
- 231 Two Can Play at that Game
- 232 Fighting by Proxy

VOL. XXX.

- 233 Unprotected Female
- 234 Pet of the Petticoats
- 235 Forty and Fifty [book]
- 236 Who Stole the Pocket-
- 237 My Son Diana [sion]
- 238 Unwarrantable Intru-
- 239 Mr. and Mrs. White
- 240 A Quiet Family

- 244 A Blighted Being
- 245 Little Toddlekins
- 246 A Lover by Proxy [Pail]
- 247 Maid with the Milking
- 248 Perplexing Predicament

VOL. XXXII.

- 249 Dr. Dilworth
- 250 Out to Nurse
- 251 A Lucky Hit
- 252 The Dowager
- 253 Metamora (Burlesque)
- 254 Dreams of Delusion
- 255 The Shaker Lovers
- 256 Ticklish Times

VOL. XXXIII.

- 257 20 Minutes with a Tiger
- 258 Miralda; or, the Justice of Tacon
- 259 A Soldier's Courtship
- 260 Servants by Legacy
- 261 Dying for Love
- 262 Alarming Sacrifice
- 263 Valet de Sham
- 264 Nicholas Nickleby

VOL. XXXIV.

- 265 The Last of the Pigtails
- 266 King Rene's Daughter
- 267 The Grotto Nymph
- 268 A Devilish Good Joke
- 269 A Twice Told Tale
- 270 Pas de Fascination
- 271 Revolutionary Soldier
- 272 A Man Without a Head

VOL. XXXV.

- 273 The Olio, Part 1
- 274 The Olio, Part 2
- 275 The Olio, Part 3 [ter]
- 276 The Trumpeter's Daugh-
- 277 Seeling Warren
- 278 Green Mountain Boy
- 279 That Noddy
- 280 Tom Noddy's Secret

VOL. XXXVI.

- 281 Shocking Events
- 282 A Regular Fix
- 283 Dick Turpin
- 284 Young Scamp
- 285 Young Actress
- 286 Call at No. 1-7
- 287 One Touch of Nature
- 288 Two B'hoys

VOL. XXXVII.

- 289 All the World's a Stage
- 290 Quash, or Nigger Prac-
- 291 Turn Him Out [tice]
- 292 Pretty Girls of Stillberg
- 293 Angel of the Attic
- 294 Circumstances alter Cases
- 295 Katty O'Sheal
- 296 A Supper in Dixie

VOL. XXXVIII.

- 297 Ici on Parle Francais
- 298 Who Killed Cock Robin
- 299 Declaration of Independ-
- 300 Heads or Tails [ence]
- 301 Obstinate Family
- 302 My Aunt
- 303 That Rascal Pat
- 304 Don Paddy de Bazar

VOL. XXXIX.

- 305 Too Much for Good Na-
- 306 Cure for the Fidgets
- 307 Jack's the Lad
- 308 Much Ado About Nothing
- 309 Artful Dodger
- 310 Winning Hazard
- 311 Day's Fishing [&c.]
- 312 Did you ever send your,

VOL. XL.

- 313 An Irishman's Maneuver
- 314 Cousin Fannie
- 315 'Tis the Darkest Hour be-
- 316 Masquerade [fore Dawn]
- 317 Crowding the Season
- 318 Good Night's Rest
- 319 Man with the Carpet Bag
- 320 Terrible Tinker

(French's Minor Drama Continued on 3d page of Cover.)

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